

United Way of Central Minnesota hereby submits its Reply Comments to Public Notice DA 07-2017, released May 7, 2007. The Public Notice requested comments on the status of implementation of the 211 and 511 Dialing Codes. Further, the Public Notice requested comments on actions the Commission should take if these Dialing Codes are not widely used. United Way of Central Minnesota is limiting its comments to the status of our United Way 2-1-1 call center hub based out of St. Cloud, Minnesota, within the Minnesota system.

United Way 2-1-1 (formerly First Call for Help, as a separate non profit funded by United Way) has been a part of Minnesota 2-1-1 since its initial deployment. United Way 2-1-1 employs 1.5 FTE people and since Minnesota 2-1-1 was launched in July of 2001, has provided 2-1-1 services to seven counties in the state of Minnesota reaching a population of 5,167,101. The statewide database of service providers used for making referrals has listings for more than 13,000 agencies and over 30,000 services/programs. In 2006, our call center responded to more than 8,050 calls.

The most common reasons clients give for calling United Way 2-1-1 are financial stress, housing/basic needs and emotional and mental health related to families. Some of the key accomplishments of United Way 2-1-1 are: responding to a 25% increase in callers, increasing the number of agencies that provide updates on services electronically and ensuring that all services are updated at least annually, distributing more than 90,000 United Way 2-1-1 information cards as a form of outreach, distributed more than 1200 community directories, became involved in Stearns County emergency planning, and compiled/distributed specific requested resource listings regarding support groups and services for ADD/ADHD/autism spectrum disorders. In addition, the 2-1-1 call information/gaps analysis report is being used in the United Way human service assessment.

United Way 2-1-1 has worked closely with the other Minnesota 2-1-1 call centers and various community partners, including the Homeless Concerns group, county human service agencies, county action programs, School District #742 on establishment of a welcome center, emergency services, local media and area employers. These and many other community partners have devoted significant time and resources to assist in outreach regarding the Minnesota 2-1-1 service to ease access for people in need of information about health and human services. We respectfully request that the Commission find the public is well-served by the use of 2-1-1, that the Commission continue to support the 2-1-1 Dialing Code for this purpose, and that the Commission use its' authority to facilitate more widespread use of the service.

Sincerely,

Noreen J. Dunnells
Chief Professional Officer
United Way of Central Minnesota